

MUNOFS VI Research Report

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Promoting women's political participation

Student Officer: Zahra Ahmed

Position: Head Chair

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is something that the world has not yet completely achieved; it is a progressing issue. Promoting women's political participation is a way to empower women and give them a voice where it matters. *"Every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they're never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent."*

– Madeleine K. Albright, NDI Chairman



A regional campaign before an election to encourage more women into politics, Tuvuvur, Papua New Guinea ("REPORT ON PERFORMANCE").

KEY TERMS DEFINED

Democracy: “Government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system” (“Democracy”).

Under-represented: “to give inadequate representation to; represent in numbers that are disproportionately low” (“Under-represented”).

Election: “the selection of a person or persons for office by vote” (“Election”).

Elected official: “official who the office in a free election” (“Elected Official”).

Suffrage: “the right to vote, especially in a political election” (“Suffrage”).

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF TOPIC

Making up over 50 percent of the world’s population, women are continually under-represented and in the political world; whether it be as voters, political leaders or elected officials. With half the population remaining overlooked in the politics, how can democracy truly deliver?

“Equitable participation of women in politics and government is essential to building and sustaining democracy” (“Women’s Political Participation”). Although most countries in the world do support their women, the world is not yet completely free of discrimination. Especially in Lower Economically Developed Countries, we need to see to it that women are not underestimated, and are educated enough to have power in politics.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED AND THEIR VIEWS

New Zealand – New Zealand is important in this issue because the country is credited to be the first to grant all women the right to vote. New Zealand encourages women to participate in politics.

Finland – Finland is credited to be the first European nation to grant all women the power to vote. Finland encourages women to participate in politics.

United States of America – The USA was also one of the first countries to grant universal suffrage to women, ratifying their 19th amendment. They had their first women to be elected in the House of Representatives in 1916. They encourage women to participate in politics.

Sweden – Sweden is famous for having the first woman Ambassador in modern history. They support women's rights to participate in politics.

Japan – Japan becomes known as the first country in Asia to allow women to vote and stand for election in 1946, making them in favor of women's rights to participate in politics.

Sri Lanka – Sri Lanka is known to have the first female Prime Minister in the world. They encourage women to participate in politics.

Bangladesh – Khaleda Zia Rahman is the first woman to become Prime Minister in Bangladesh in 1991, and now for almost two decades, Bangladesh has seen two women leaders come in and out of power; Khaleda Zia Rahman and Sheikh Hasina.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1756: Lydia Chapin Taft, also known as Lydia Taft, became the first legal woman voter in America. She voted in 3 town hall meetings with the consent of the electorate.

1776: The State Constitution of New Jersey granted all property-owning citizens the right to vote, regardless of race or color. However, this right was lost in 1807 when it was restricted to white males.

1869: Wyoming becomes the first sub-national territory to grant women the right to vote, followed by Utah (1870, lost in 1887, restored in 1895), Colorado (1893), Arizona (1912), Oregon (1912), Illinois (1913) and Montana (1914).

1872: Susan B. Anthony is the first US woman to vote in a presidential election; subsequently, she is arrested for having voted illegally. However, her trial provided her with a much more public platform to spread her message. True to her word, she never paid the fine imposed upon her as punishment for voting.

1881: The Isle of Man gives property-owning unmarried women and widows the right to vote, becoming the first nation to do so.

1882: Aletta Jacobs is the first woman in the Netherlands to attempt to register to vote; her application is denied.

1893: New Zealand grants all women the right to vote; however, New Zealand is not a sovereign nation at this time but a self-governing colony of the British Empire. Regardless, New Zealand is often credited today for being the first nation to grant all women the right to vote. Women gained the right to stand for office in New Zealand in 1919.

1906-1907: Finland becomes the first European nation to give women the vote, and 19 women are elected to the new 200-person Finnish parliament.

1916: Jeanette Rankin of Montana is the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

1920: The US ratifies the 19th Amendment, providing universal suffrage to women.

1928: Women ages 21 to 29 in Britain are able to vote for the first time, as women's suffrage is reduced from age 30 to 21.

1930: Alexandra Kollontai is appointed Ambassador from the Soviet Union to Sweden, becoming the first woman Ambassador in modern history.

1933: Frances Perkins, the first U.S. female Cabinet member, is appointed Secretary of Labor. This makes her the first woman to enter the line of succession to the US Presidency at number 11.

1946: Women vote and stand for election to the House of Representatives for the first time in Japan. Of the 79 women running for office, 39 are elected.

1960: Nakayama Masa is appointed Minister of Health and Welfare in Japan, becoming Japan's first female cabinet member.

1960: Siramavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) becomes the world's first female Prime Minister.

1966: Indira Gandhi becomes the first Prime Minister of India.

1968: Soong Ching-ling named Co-Chairwoman of the People's Republic of China, becoming the first non-royal woman to lead the state of China.

1969: Golda Meir becomes the first female Prime Minister of Israel.

1974: Maria Estela (Isabela) Martinez de Peron succeeds her husband and becomes the first woman President of Argentina and the first female head of state in the Americas.

1977: Patricia Harris is tapped by President Lyndon B. Johnson to become the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, becoming the first African American woman to be named to the Cabinet and enter the Presidential line of succession.

1979: Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo becomes the first woman Prime Minister of Portugal.

1979: Lidia Geiler is the first woman elected President of Bolivia.

1979: Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. She served in that position -- winning re-election in 1983 and in 1987 -- until resigning in 1990.

1979: Simone Weil of France is the first woman elected President of the European Parliament.

1980: Vigdis Finnbogadóttir is the first woman elected President of Iceland.

1980: Jeanne Sauvé is the first woman appointed Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada.

1981: Gro Harlem Brundtland is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Norway.

1982: Agatha Barbara is elected President of Malta.

1982: Milka Planinc is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Yugoslavia.

1982: Eugenia Charles, Doinica, is the first woman to become Prime Minister in the Caribbean.

1982: Rosario Ibarra de Piedra is the first woman to run for President of Mexico.

1984: Geraldine Ferraro (D) is the first woman nominated for Vice-President by either major political party in the United States.

1985: Maria Liberia-Peters is the first woman to become Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles.

1986: Corazon Aquino is the first woman elected president of the Philippines.

1988: Benazir Bhutto is the first woman elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and becomes the first woman elected to head a Muslim country. However, she was removed from office 20 months later on false charges of corruption. In 1993 she was re-elected but was again removed in 1996. She then went into self-imposed exile in Dubai for security reasons. In 2007, she returned to Pakistan as a popular figure, likely to win election to be Prime Minister once again. She was assassinated by Islamic Fundamental Extremists on December 27, 2007.

1989: Violeta Barrios de Chamorro elected President of Nicaragua.

1990: Mary Robinson is the first woman elected President of Ireland.

1990: Ertha Pascal-Trouillot is the first woman elected President of Haiti.

1990: Carmen Lawrence is Australia's first female Premier.

1991: Edith Cresson is the first woman elected Prime Minister of France.

1991: Khaleda Zia Rahman is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

1991: Rita Johnston is Canada's first female Premier.

1992: California elects two women, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, to the U.S. Senate.

1992: Betty Boothroyd is the first woman chosen to be Speaker of the House of Commons in Great Britain.

1992: Hanna Suchocka is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Poland.

1993: Toujan Faisal is the first woman elected to the Parliament of Jordan.

1993: Tansu Ciller is the first woman elected Prime Minister of Turkey.

1993: Agathe Uwilingiyimana is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Rwanda, though she was officially relieved of her position eighteen days later. She remained in the position however in a "caretaker

capacity" until her assassination in 1994 at the beginning of the Rwandan Genocide.

1993: Anson Chan is the first woman, also the first Chinese person, to be appointed Chief Secretary, the number two position in Hong Kong.

1993: Sylvie Kinigi is the first woman to become Prime Minister of Burundi.

1993: Canada received first female Prime Minister Kim Campbell.

1994: Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga elected President of Sri Lanka.

1995: Two women run for President and 8 for Vice President of Peru, the first time women have been candidates for these offices.

1997: Mary McAleese elected President of Ireland.

1999: Vaira Vike-Freiberga elected to President of Latvia. She is the first woman to president of a country in Eastern Europe of the former Soviet Union.

1999: Mireya Elisa Moscoso de Arias becomes first female President of Panama.

1999: Helen Clark elected Prime Minister of New Zealand.

2000: Tarja Kaarina Halonen elected to be Finland's first female President.

2001: Maria Gloria Macapagal Arroyo elected President of the Philippines.

2001: Megawati Sukarnoputri elected as the first woman President of the Republic of Indonesia.

2002: Nancy Pelosi is sworn in as the House Democratic Whip - the highest-ranking leadership position ever held by a women in the United States Congress at that time. She was later named Minority Leader.

2003: Beatriz Merino was elected as Prime Minister of Peru, becoming the first woman to hold the position. However, unsubstantiated rumors began to circulate about Merino that she was a lesbian due to her status as unmarried and having bought a house with a female colleague. Due to the fact that Peru is a deeply Roman Catholic nation, these rumors were enough to have Merino dismissed from office 6 months after her term began, despite a 60% job approval rating.

2004: Luisa Diogo is elected Prime Minister of Mozambique.

2004-2005: Yulia Tymoshenko helps lead the Ukrainian Orange Revolution and is named Prime Minister by her "Orange Partner" President Viktor Yushenko. Yushenko removes her from office in 2006 and reappoints her once again to the office in 2007.

2005: Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson elected Africa's first female president as Liberia's head-of-state in November.

2005: Angela Merkel elected Chancellor of Germany.

2006: Democrats take control of the United States Congress and Nancy Pelosi is elevated to the position of Speaker of the House. She is the third highest ranking official in the United States government and the highest ranking female in US political history.

2006: Michelle Bachelet is elected President of Chile.

2006: Portia Simpson Miller elected first Prime Minister of Jamaica.

2007: Senator Hillary Clinton is the first woman to ever be considered as a top candidate (or even a serious one) for the US Presidency. However, she eventually loses the Democratic Party Nomination to Senator Barack Obama of Illinois in the tightest Primary race in US history.

2007: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner elected President of Argentina.

2007: Pratibha Patil is elected President of India.

2008: Zinaida Greceanîi is elected Prime Minister of Moldova. (“Women in Politics: A Timeline”).

UN INVOLVEMENT

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - This is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3 September 1981. Over fifty countries that have ratified the Convention have done so subject to certain declarations, reservations, and objections, including 38 countries that rejected the enforcement article 29, which addresses means of settlement for disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Providing education (such as university courses for political science) and advertising this to the public in LEDCs
- Advertising campaigns showing women participating in politics (voting, speaking to the public, etc).
- Educate men about equality so that women are not deemed “insignificant” in politics in LEDCs
- Finding a way to encourage already educated women to speak out and take part in political parties

FURTHER READING

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women -

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

United Nations Women’s Treaty -

<http://web.archive.org/web/20040423160533/http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/mar98/unwomen.html>

Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes,
with Particular Emphasis on Political Participation and Leadership

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/FinalReport.pdf>

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